

THE BIN LADENS

AN ARABIAN FAMILY
IN THE AMERICAN CENTURY

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thing of a health nut, and Martin eventually found a Polish-born personal trainer and masseur who accompanied him on his travels, worked him out, and kept his muscles loose. Perhaps the most remarkable case of an accidental fortune in Bakr's entourage belonged to Nur Bayoun, the Lebanese travel agent who had served as an informal guardian to some of the Bin Laden boys during the early 1960s. After civil war erupted in Lebanon, Bayoun was invited to Jeddah. He won a luxury Bulgari jewelry franchise in Saudi Arabia; the attractiveness of owning such a business in the kingdom can be readily imagined, and Bayoun became exceptionally wealthy. He eventually married a young woman who seemed to be about half his age and who traveled on vacations with the Bin Laden family draped in what appeared to be two to three million dollars' worth of Bulgari jewelry.⁴

Apart from Osama, the primary source of concern in Bakr's world seemed to be his relationship with the Al-Saud. All the confidence and swagger he had built up in the years since Salem's death could vanish the instant a prince walked in the room. In the confines of his own majlis, he was a sheikh among sheikhs, but in the royal courts of Riyadh, he remained just an overachieving Yemeni, vulnerable to the whims of the genealogy-conscious Al-Saud; he could never marry into their ranks or expect their full acceptance. Bakr would leap to open the door deferentially for even a minor royal. He seemed to worry chronically about the disposition of the major Al-Saud on whom his businesses relied—Crown Prince Abdullah, of course, but also Prince Salman, the governor of Riyadh, and Abdulaziz bin Fahd, the son of the disabled king. Abdulaziz had built himself a palace campus along the Red Sea in Jeddah that made Bakr's look cramped by comparison. The Bin Ladens watched after the king's son attentively.

Bakr kept track of the news, and he had some contemporary political interests: For example, he was more interested in environmental issues, such as the health of the Red Sea, than many Arabians. He spoke

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